

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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R 040450Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7413

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2828

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR PBOR MILI MOPS SHUM SNAR PINR LA TH VN

SUBJECT: LAO INSURGENCY STATUS REPORT

1. RESISTANCE TO THE YEAR OLD COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT OF LAOS IS WIDE-SPREAD AND A MAJOR CONCERN OF THAT GOVERNMENT. LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (LPLA) TROOPS ARE ENGAGED IN EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS INSURGENTS WHO CONTROL RURAL AREAS IN MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND WHO THROUGH AMBUSHES AND THE BLOCKING OF ROADS SEVERELY HAMPER GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN MANY PARTS OF THE LPDR. ANTI-COMMUNIST INSURGENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED AN ABILITY TO HOLD SMALL POPULATION CENTERS AND MAKE INSECURE LARGE AREAS OF LPDR TERRITORY, PARTICULARLY IN THE WESTERN BORDER REGION OF SAYABOURY, HMONG (MEO) HILL TRIBES AREAS OF XIENG KHOUANG, AREAS NORTH OF PAKSANE, AND THE REGION BETWEEN SAVANNAKHET AND PAKSE. INSURGENTS HAVE ALSO REPORTEDLY ENTERED SAYABOURY CITY AND PAKSANE AND HAVE OCCASIONALLY CLOSED TRAFFIC ALONG STRATEGIC ROUTE 81 LINKING CENTRAL VIETNAM AND CENTRAL LAOS. THEY HAVE ALSO MADE IT HAZARDOUS FOR LPLA SOLDIERS TO TRAVEL ON ROUTE 13 BETWEEN SAVANNAKHET AND PAKSE. SRV REGULAR FORCES HAVE ALSO BEEN DEPLOYED INTO SEVERAL AREAS TO ASSIST THE LPLA WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES IN CLASHES WITH THE INSURGENTS.

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2. DURING THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF 1976, THE

INSURGENT FORCES WERE COMPOSED OF HMONG HILL TRIBESMEN, LAO REFUGEES, FORMER FAR TROOPS, LPLA DEFECTORS, AND DISGRUNTLED STUDENTS.

3. THE INSURGENTS HAVE RELIED EITHER ON SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION CACHED BEFORE THE COMMUNISTS CAME TO POWER OR CAPTURED STOCKS PLUS MEN AND MATERIEL SUPPORT OBTAINED FROM THAI AND LOCAL SOURCES. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT SOME THAI OFFICIALS ARE ALSO COVERTLY PROVIDING SOME SUPPORT TO THE VARIOUS GROUPS OF INSURGENTS. THE HMONG, WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY PRODUCED OPIUM, ARE, ACCORDING TO TWO VIETIANE (EUROPEAN) SOURCES, REPORTEDLY SMUGGLING IT ACROSS THE MEKONG TO BARTER FOR ARMS.

4. LEADERSHIP OF THE VAGUELY DEFINED RESISTANCE GROUPS IS DISPARATE WITH A FEW FORMER WELL-KNOWN LAO ANTI-COMMUNISTS AMONG THOSE MENTIONED AS BEING INVOLVED IN RESISTANCE EITHER FROM WITHOUT OR WITHIN THE LPDR.

5. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS THE INSURGENTS HAVE THUS FAR INVOLVED DIRECT APPLICATION OF MILITARY FORCES INCLUDING AIR AND GROUND ASSAULTS ON INSURGENT POSITIONS, FORCED RELOCATION OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE SYMPATHETIC TO THE GUERRILLAS AND, ACCORDING TO A FRENCH SOURCE, THE REPORTED USE OF POISON GAS AND NAPALM. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT DEMOBILIZED ANY OF ITS STANDING FORCE SINCE COMING TO POWER AND HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE RECRUITMENT OF ADDITIONAL FOR SERVICE IN THE LPLA AND MILITIA.

6. VIENTIANE AND THE OTHER LEADING POPULATION CENTERS OF THE LPDR ARE RELATIVELY SECURE EXCEPT FOR ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF TERRORISM; E.G., THE GRENADING OF THE VIENTIANE RADIO STATION AND CUBAN AND SOVIET EMBASSIES ABOUT NINE MONTHS AGO. BUT THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT SECURITY EVEN IN URBAN AREAS IT CONTROLS, AS EVIDENCED BY ITS PERIODIC ARRESTS OF CITIZENS FOR ALLEGEDLY AIDING "REACTIONARIES" AND THE CONTROLLED PRESS'S FREQUENT ADMONITIONS TO THE POPULATION TO BE ALERT TO "REACTIONARY SABOTAGE SCHEMES".

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THE NUMBER OF SUCH WARNINGS INCREASED WHEN THE AUTHORITIES WERE WORRIED ABOUT SABOTAGE OF THE DIKES AT THE TIME OF THE MEKONG RIVER CRESTED AND ALSO DURING THE THAT LUANG FAIR WHEN LARGE CROWDS GATHERED.

7. COMMENT: THUS FAR, THE PRINCIPAL FACTORS LIMITING THE EXPANSION OF THE INSURGENCY HAVE BEEN THE DEARTH

OF MEN AND MATERIEL SUPPORT AND THE FAILURE OF THE  
INSURGENTS TO COORDINATE THEIR LEADERSHIP. THOUGH  
FACTIONALIZED LEADERSHIP REMAINS A PROBLEM, THE  
COMING TO POWER OF AN AVOWEDLY ANTI-COMMUNIST GOVERN-  
MENT IN BANGKOK MAY SUGGEST TO SOME INSURGENTS  
THAT THEIR PROSPECTS FOR OBTAINING INCREASED SUPPORT  
FROM SOURCES IN THAILAND ARE BETTER.

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